

MINUTES

Eugene City Council
McNutt Room—City Hall
777 Pearl Street—Eugene, Oregon

April 18, 2012
Noon

COUNCILORS PRESENT: George Brown, Pat Farr, Betty Taylor, Andrea Ortiz, George Poling, Chris Pryor, Alan Zelenka.

COUNCILORS ABSENT: Mike Clark.

In the absence of Her Honor Mayor Kitty Piercy, Council President George Brown called the April 18, 2012, work session of the Eugene City Council to order.

A. WORK SESSION: Rental Housing Code

Building Official Stuart Ramsing led the council through a PowerPoint presentation titled *Rental Housing Code*. The presentation provided information about the work of the advisory committee established by the Housing Policy Board to review the Rental Housing Code. He shared the committee's recommendations:

- a) *Reduce the annual unit fee to draw down the reserves*
- b) *Explore further development of online accounts and billing*
- c) *Provide public access to complaints and staff work online*
- d) *Develop online resources to answer frequently asked questions for both tenants and owners*
- e) *Explore more effective outreach regarding the program's availability, purpose and process*
- f) *Explore other ways of billing, both in-house and outsourcing*
- g) *Explore multi-year billing option (requires an ordinance change to implement)*
- h) *Work with a committee of the Housing Policy Board for policy-level review and input*
- i) *Explore changing the late fee to proportionally relate to size of a past-due payment*
- j) *Explore contracting with community organizations for portions of the program*

Mr. Ramsing highlighted the City Manager's recommendation to extend the Rental Housing Code for four years to fall 2016.

Councilors asked questions clarifying the details of the presentation.

Mr. Zelenka supported the manager's recommendation. He requested information about how many billings were sent to collections. He was not very interested in privatizing the billing. Mr. Zelenka expressed interest in adding appliances, air infiltration, and dry wall conditions to the code's habitability standards. He also wanted to reduce the times for notice and action for conditions requiring immediate attention.

Mr. Pryor wanted to continue the Rental Housing Program but he was concerned about maintaining community trust. He cited the size of the program surplus as an example of something that could strain that trust. He advocated for a code that was thoughtful, smart, and implemented fairly and equitably. He felt many of the recommendations reflected sensitivity to the concerns that had been expressed and wanted to continue to restore and build confidence that the code would be used in a way to fulfill its stated purpose.

Ms. Taylor determined from Mr. Ramsing that renters were surveyed in regard to the program but did not serve on the advisory committee. She questioned how the program captured revenues from short-term landlords. Ms. Taylor endorsed Mr. Zelenka's suggestions and was also interested in mandating energy efficiency through the Rental Housing code. She called for an increase in the late fee and the annual fee. Ms. Taylor did not think the ordinance should sunset so its original proponents did not have to worry about the possibility and said the council could repeal it if it needed to.

Mr. Farr recalled the code was intended to provide minimal habitability criteria and he believed the council needed to keep that in mind when considering additions. He agreed with Mr. Pryor's remarks about building trust.

City Manager Jon Ruiz arrived.

Mr. Brown questioned why the City would reduce the fee when it was expected the reserves would be drawn down in the next fiscal year. He believed the Rental Housing Program was very important and the fee involved was trivial. He believed that valid tenant concerns led to the formation of the program.

Ms. Ortiz supported a sunset because it provided an opportunity for council review and program adjustments. She supported moving forward with provisions that addressed the health and safety of tenants, such as working toilets, hot and cold running water, operable smoke detectors, and heat. Ms. Ortiz agreed with Mr. Zelenka that a landlord response should not take so much time. She expressed concern about including appliances in the habitability standards because she did not want to discourage landlords from providing appliances.

Responding to a question from Ms. Ortiz, Assistant City Manager Medary confirmed the City had a program surplus and if nothing changed and the program was operated as it currently was, the fee would have to be raised. Staff was working to reduce the program costs and maintain the existing fee. Staff was also considering the potential of a rebate as a way to build trust.

Mr. Poling opposed the inclusion of appliances or any other provision to the code at this time.

Mr. Zelenka also wanted to add minimum health and safety provisions to the Rental Housing Code as suggested by Ms. Ortiz. He liked the sunset provision because it required the council to review the code, although he believed the council could establish a mandatory review without a sunset provision.

Mr. Brown questioned how other cities used their fee revenues and if the revenues were placed in reserve or used for other programs. He wanted to eliminate the sunset provision because he envisioned there would always be tension between landlords and their tenants, who were frequently disadvantaged. He endorsed the additions suggested by Mr. Zelenka and Ms. Ortiz. He also supported a shorter response time. Mr. Brown believed that the City should require landlords to present their tenants with a brochure regarding the program when the lease was signed.

Mr. Brown recommended that the City raise the program rates and dedicate the revenues to a fund to support a homeless encampment and a fund dedicated to affordable housing.

Mr. Farr, seconded by Ms. Taylor, moved to approve the City Manager's recommendation to develop an ordinance that extends the sunset provision to fall 2016 and to schedule a public hearing and council action on the proposed ordinance. And to direct the City Manager to discuss with the previously formed committee ideas for proposed changes to the ordinance and bring back recommendation to the council in the fall.

Ms. Taylor, seconded by Mr. Brown, moved to eliminate the sunset and replace it with a mandatory discussion every four years. The amendment passed, 4:3; Mr. Poling, Mr. Pryor, and Mr. Farr voting no.

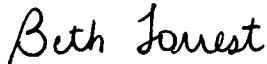
The amended motion passed, 4:3; Mr. Poling, Mr. Pryor, and Mr. Farr voting no.

**B. WORK SESSION:
Transportation System Plan**

Transportation Planner Kurt Yeiter led the council through a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Transportation System Plan (TSP) update. Councilors asked questions clarifying the information presented. Councilors asked questions clarifying the details of the presentation and generally commended the presentation and the approach the City was taking to the update.

Mr. Brown adjourned the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Forrest
City Recorder

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)